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two university of illinois professional school programs*

In Agriculture

Excerpts of a letter from **John Titus**
Chairman, Honors Council
College of Agriculture, University of Illinois

The Honors program in the College of Agriculture at the University of Illinois is part of a University-wide Honors program under the direction of Professor R. E. Johnson. Most of the Colleges on this campus are developing programs for their own students which are integrated through the Faculty Honors Council. The program in Agriculture is directed through a six-member College Honors Council—two of whom are members of the Faculty Honors Council.

In the College of Agriculture we have established our own selection procedure to designate Honors students at the beginning of the second semester of the freshman year. Promising students, selected on the basis of high school records, aptitude tests and first semester mid-term grades are invited to apply for the Honors Program in December. Those who apply and whose academic performance is superior during the first semester are designated as Honors Students. This group comes from the upper ten percent of the freshman class.

The Honors Students are required to participate in a freshman Honors seminar during the second semester. This seminar does not purport to replace any technical area or subject matter taught within the college. This year the group, whose academic interests range from agronomy to veterinary physiology, including home economics, is making a study of the agriculture, economy and political structure of some dozen foreign countries. The subject matter is not so important as the library experience, the critical evaluation of the materials covered, the oral presentations and earnest discussions following them and the written reports which are required. One of the very gratifying reactions to this seminar has been the students' awakened interest in literature, economics, history and politics.

A sophomore seminar for this same group is now being organized under the leadership of one of the keenest men on our staff. It will involve, we hope, a close relationship between the students and several outstanding faculty members in our college. Honors students participating in this seminar will be given the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of what has motivated these men, what aspects of their training have contributed to the progress they have made in their research, and how their own horizons have been broadened by developments in other arts and sciences.

A junior year program is developing which will require Honors students in Agriculture to participate actively in one or more Honors courses in one of the other Colleges of the University.

At the present time we are not attempting to emphasize specialization through the Honors Program since this is generally encouraged in our departmental curricula. We have had available for some years a program in Agricultural Science which provides a solid background in basic sciences and greater flexibility than most of the departmental

*For earlier accounts of the University of Illinois All-University Honors Program see THE SUPERIOR STUDENT, (March, 1959) 10, (January, 1960) 9.

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curricula. Since this program was designed for students preparing for graduate study many Honors students will be encouraged to follow this curriculum.

The most difficult problem has been the selection of staff members to direct the seminars. So far we have been very fortunate in being able to interest extremely well qualified people to participate in the program—or at least people who the members of the council have felt would be qualified. Unfortunately, these are just the people who are qualified for, and deeply involved in, other serious undertakings. Our experience has been that Honors teaching is far more demanding than other fields of instruction. More than a mastery of the subject matter is required in order to challenge constantly the students whose curiosity and interest require more of the instructor than the prepared lecture. However, this extra effort is mitigated to some extent by the stimulation which our faculty members have found in working with these students.

In Business: Honors Objectives

by **Walter W. McMahon**
Director, Honors Program
College of Commerce and
Business Administration
University of Illinois

Undergraduate professional colleges* are attracting over half of the students** earning degrees in the United States and are also attracting many of the ablest students. It is in these colleges that Honors programs are "most needed" in the view of Vice President Harrington of the University of Wisconsin.*** Yet it is in the undergraduate professional colleges that Honors programs are only just beginning to develop. They seek to take advantage of the superior capacity of Honors students to learn more quickly and to handle analyses of greater difficulty than the average student.

The discussion which follows is largely based on experience with the Honors Program in the College of Commerce and Business Administration at the University of Illinois. This program seeks to further the aims of professional education within the framework suggested by the ICSS.****

HONORS OBJECTIVES AND PROFESSIONAL AIMS

Professional education differs from liberal or general education primarily in its greater emphasis on the utilization of knowledge. Both foster the pursuit of truth and encourage efforts to serve the common good. But professional education seeks to avoid the extremes of acquiring knowledge entirely for its own sake or of emphasizing the application of knowledge to the point of teaching only how-to-do-it.

To serve the aims of both liberal and professional education, Honors programs in professional schools should seek to combine the following objectives: 1) the search for truth taken from the tradition in liberal education, 2) the concern of professional education that knowledge be useful and relevant, and

*The term "professional college" will be used for brevity to refer to non-liberal arts undergraduate colleges in general, but will exclude such colleges as Law and Medicine which present different problems for Honors work because of the graduate level of instruction.
Computed from "Earned Degrees Conferred", Chapter 4, Statistics of Higher Education, **Biennial Survey of Education, U. S. Office of Education, 1958, 76-103.
***"What About the Professional Schools?—Where Honors Programs Are Most Needed," THE SUPERIOR STUDENT (February, 1959) 2.
****See THE SUPERIOR STUDENT (October, 1959) 4.

3) the Honors goal of maximum utilization of the intellectual capacities of superior students.

The Honors Council has set itself certain objectives by means of which it hopes to implement these general aims. The first is development of analytical ability and application of this ability in the attainment of knowledge about the fundamental variables within an area of specialization. The Honors student is further encouraged to engage in original, independent thinking about the basic forces operating in any given field, so that data about current developments can be interpreted in the light of knowledge of fundamental relationships. He can also benefit from research experience that encourages objective analysis of assembled information and original solutions to problems. This experience is directly relevant, since many business decisions are now made on the basis of extensive studies which are essentially research efforts.

To achieve this objective, carefully selected freshman Honors students are encouraged but not required to enroll in special sections of the large multi-section courses. These sections have an analytical approach and probe deeply rather than cover a large volume of material. The intellectual challenge and exploration of underlying assumptions in this classroom atmosphere have resulted in an enthusiastic student response. Given a free choice, all have elected to continue in Honors sections in the succeeding semesters. They now trust a policy which avoids coercion and which results in grades that are comparable to what they would have attained in a regular section.

In addition to the Honors sections, advisers encourage Commerce Honors students to select challenging, analytically-oriented courses, and all have been made aware of additional Honors sections available elsewhere in the university. Many take logic and are continuing mathematics through advanced calculus, matrices and differential equations.

Senior Honors students will be encouraged to engage in research projects with faculty members and to write research papers. Honors courses providing for research experience have existed for many years in each department. They should be used more intensively than they are at present as the first Honors group reaches the senior year.

A second important Honors objective is to provide the Honors student with a better background in the liberal arts and sciences. His abilities should not be channeled only into increased specialization or acceleration. Although specialization increases efficiency through division of labor, if it is not supplemented with a broadening of perspectives it can lead to discord, to incomplete development of potential and to limited participation in the intellectual life of our society.

To promote liberalization, enrollment is encouraged in a well balanced nucleus of courses in the humanities, natural sciences and social sciences. As it turned out, the first group of Honors students, although firmly committed to preparing for a career, also had strong interests in the sciences and the humanities.

Another means of broadening perspectives is through an informal program involving attendance by the Honors group at cultural events, such as university lectures, concerts or plays. The purpose is not only to introduce freshmen to cultural opportunities but also to create opportunities for informal student-faculty discussions in faculty homes. Since the students have shown interest in organizing the informal program themselves, it has also proved useful in providing some leadership experience.

Liberalization will be further imple-

mented through a problem-centered interdisciplinary Honors colloquium for juniors and seniors. Since it is the first of its kind to be proposed at the University of Illinois, specific comment will be deferred. But, in general, Honors colloquia are key points at which the all-university approach at Illinois has some major advantages. They can facilitate cooperation among the undergraduate professional colleges and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and can thereby add breadth to departmental or college sponsored programs. The College of Commerce and Business Administration, for example, is considering an Honors seminar in the behavioral sciences which should draw students from other colleges as well as Commerce students. A major advantage in locating Honors colloquia in professional colleges is the greater ease with which they can then become a part of the curricula of professional school Honors students.

The greatest unexplored opportunities for Honors work lie in the professional colleges. But Honors work can fall short of its potential in either professional or liberal arts colleges. The curriculum flexibility which it introduces can be wasted if there are no clearly articulated Honors objectives that press for high standards and high quality. With a clear sense of purpose, professional school Honors programs are in a position to utilize a strong tradition and to make a unique contribution. They should be best equipped to take a basic idea, such as the encouragement of excellence through Honors work, add to it an element of usefulness, and combine it with a quest for results guided by a clearly conceived set of values.

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distinctive features of the university of wisconsin honors program*

Last year the faculty of the College of Letters and Science at the University of Wisconsin authorized its Honors Committee, under the chairmanship of Professor Alvin Whitley, to proceed with the implementation of a full, four-year Honors Program to begin for freshmen and sophomores in September, 1960, and for upperclassmen in September, 1961. In recommending the program, the Honors Committee made the following appeal directly to the citizens of Wisconsin:

"We believe the citizens of the State of Wisconsin will wish their State University to provide a suitably improved education for those of their sons and daughters with unusual talents. We feel that the attention given to such students has not been developed or maintained adequately as the general program of the College has been altered and improved in recent years. The senior faculty of the College has given more and more of its individual attention to its graduate

*From faculty reports. A program will be inaugurated next year on the Milwaukee campus under the chairmanship of Professor Herman Weil.